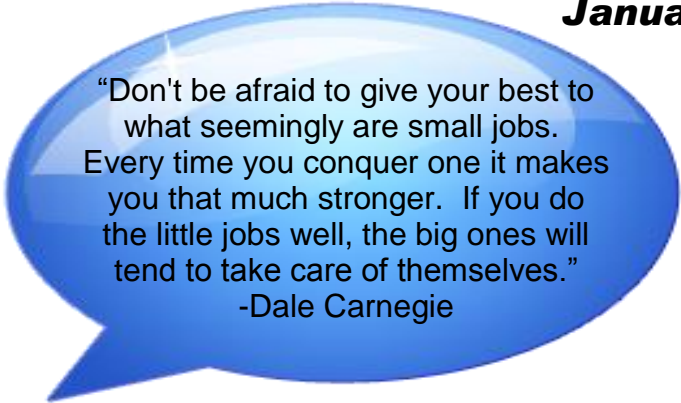


DPI VISTA Monthly

January 2010



"Don't be afraid to give your best to what seemingly are small jobs. Every time you conquer one it makes you that much stronger. If you do the little jobs well, the big ones will tend to take care of themselves."
-Dale Carnegie

Jane Grinde
Project Director

Betsy Prueter
Project Coordinator

Ruth Anne Landsverk
Family Education Coordinator

Penny Bruskin
VISTA Leader

Casey Gauthier
VISTA Leader, Editor

Why Have a Partnership Action Team?

By Ruth Anne Landsverk

This is a good time of year to remember that an annual goal for Classic VISTAs is to get a Partnership Action Team up and running. It's easy to get caught up in the flurry of holding events, filing biweekly reports, and keeping that Inbox under control. But, June is almost halfway here and that enigmatic word, sustainability, will keep rearing its head more frequently as biting-fly season approaches. Following, are a few good reasons for your school's Action Team to exist and to continue meeting faithfully through the long winter months ahead.



You get to eat goodies and build relationships. Let's face it, meetings are just plain easier to go to if treats are served. As Action Team facilitator, you will have the

opportunity to make or purchase your own culinary wonders for meetings. Occasionally, you'll get a chance to sample some of your members' snacks, too. Either way, you'll make friends, create camaraderie, and expand your recipe collection.



You can bounce ideas off of someone else besides your cat/plant/six-month-old. No one will better understand your partnership dilemmas than your fellow Action Teamers. They'll not only be able to sympathize with how difficult it is to keep the pizza warm for Family Math Night, but they may come up with good ideas, an extra pair of helping hands, or a supply of solar-powered pizza ovens from Grade 4 science projects (Note: not recommended on January nights). Action teams keep great ideas fresh, not frozen.



You get to make things happen in your school. The folks on your Action Team, such as parents, teachers, janitors, lunch ladies, bus drivers, and the school

counselor, are people who get things done. Use their wisdom to link families to learning, and your Action Team will be movin' and shakin'.



Those smart fifth graders get even smarter. When Action Teams work to connect families to children's learning, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th graders get smarter, too. The goals and activities you devise and carry out in your school's One-Year Action Plan will keep student achievement on the rise. Why? Because, thanks to the Action Team's efforts to help families learn subject-specific practices, families will be on board, in the know, and working to help children learn outside of the classroom, too. Does anyone know how to find the area of a parallelogram?




School becomes community. Action Teams invite community members and community resources into the school and into students' lives. They knock down walls of misunderstanding and build communication and trust. Action Teams put people who need a phone, a job, a vaccination, a meal, in touch with those who provide them. They identify the needs and gaps in children's and families' lives, then do their best to fill them.



The Action Team is a legacy to the school. Eventually, you will leave it all behind and wonder if they are still carrying on without you. The plans you write, the events you help organize, and the networks of people you help connect don't just evaporate. They continue, most likely in a form slightly different than when you were there, but

without you, they might never have happened at all.

Save the Dates!



January 12-13:
Wisconsin Promise
Conference

January 15:
Quarterly Report due

January 22:
VISTA Monthly
Check-In

Rhinelanders are Getting the Six Types

By Anna Morgen

Parents in the School District of Rhinelanders are going to receive information in a new way this spring semester. Starting in January, parents will have the opportunity to attend "Scoop Sessions," during which a wide variety of topics relevant to them will be presented. Topics include: how to navigate the district website, the importance of eating together and how to generate good conversations at the table, child health and nutrition, and reading together at home. By setting up these sessions, we are trying to keep in mind the Six Types of Involvement. All of the sessions cover **Parenting** and many of them

have topics regarding **Learning at Home**.

These sessions will only be about 20-25 minutes in length and will take place at the end of the school day, immediately before students are dismissed. They will be held twice a month at three schools in the district and will be presented by members of the community as well as school staff members.

The session topics were pulled directly from parents' responses to a survey that I distributed earlier in the school year. This survey contained a question in which they were simply asked to write down a few topics that



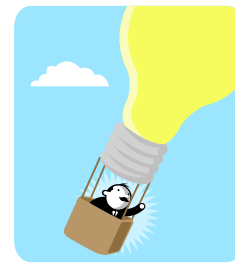
they would be interested in hearing more about. By doing this, the parents had a say in the

Decision Making process of what the sessions would actually be about.

We are **Collaborating with the Community** by creating new partnerships and calling upon old ones. Finding knowledgeable volunteers from the community and the school district to come to the schools and talk for a short period of time was fairly simple. Some of the presenters that are **Volunteering** are actually parents themselves. The community members that have agreed to present are all very knowledgeable in their fields, and are really looking forward to presenting this information to parents in the schools in a very quick and informal way. Hopefully, the time frame in which the sessions are held

and the variety of topics will make coming into the school a more positive and enjoyable experience for parents. Flyers will be sent home with students just after winter break, **Communicating** information about the sessions to parents ahead of time. We also are looking into providing a small snack for all who attend the sessions.

“Hey! That’s a Good Idea!” Corner



Heather Knops and Jane Parker, VISTAs with Shiocton Public Library, have promoted the nutritional and cost-effective SHARE program to those in their community. They have also used the library as an ordering/pickup hub for the program, which has made it more accessible for those in the Shiocton community.

HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Colleen Douglass, VISTA with Vaughn Public Library, has been working towards opening a computer lab that will be designated for community members who are looking for employment and job training resources. **EMPLOYMENT AND JOB SKILLS TRAINING**

Tracy Steffens, VISTA at Washington Elementary School, created a newsletter to share with staff on a bi-weekly basis. Though she has opted for a less green-

friendly distribution by printing the newsletter and stuffing them in mailboxes, Tracy realizes that staff is bombarded with emails and they are less likely to read an electronic version of the newsletter. She is hoping that the newsletter will become a two-way mode of positive interaction. **COMMUNICATION**

Sarah Glassman, VISTA at Maple Tree Elementary School, has recently started working with Growing Power, a national nonprofit, and discussing the idea of hosting workshops on family nutrition and exercise. Maple Tree is also looking into forming a youth corps in conjunction with Growing Power. **COLLABORATING**

Dustin Young, VISTA at Dane County Transition School, is bringing two volunteers from the community into the school to speak about career options in nursing and journalism. In addition to connecting community members with the school, this effort also helps with recruiting and retaining volunteers by allowing volunteers to share their passions and assets with students. **VOLUNTEERING**

Nicole Stachurski, VISTA at Grove Elementary School, was able to speak with a group of parents during a recent book fair. Though these parents have not taken the opportunity to speak their minds at organized meetings, their input and ideas were important. It is vital to not only listen to parents who attend meetings, but also to seek out opinions from those who are unable

to attend meetings regularly.

DECISION MAKING

Library VISTAs, Are you Friends with your Friends Group?

By Josh Cowles

Many public libraries have a group called Friends of the Library. You might not realize it, but often the friends group is behind library fundraisers like book sales, bake sales, and brat frys. Larger libraries have friends groups that do many things, such as putting on major galas, sponsoring literary awards, and offering members a chance to meet prominent authors. If your library has a friends group, it is probably of the former variety rather than the latter. As a VISTA and in your role as a capacity builder, you can help your friends group grow into something bigger while reaping the benefits of connecting your project to a library fundraising organization.

What are friends for?

A library friends group is an organization formed to support the library through fundraising. Your public library is probably a municipal entity of some sort. The library itself cannot offer tax deductibility for donations, but friends groups are generally organized as 501(c)3 non-profit organizations, which allows donations to be tax deductible. Similarly, there are many grants that are only available to non-profits that have 501(c)3 status. In cooperation with your friends group, you may be able to apply for these grants that are not library-specific by using the

friends as the receiving organization for grant funds.

Additionally, a well-run friends group could take some of the work out of fundraising since a framework already exists for that purpose. Rather than building a resource development program from scratch, you can build capacity in the friends group to help support not only your project, but the library itself into the future.

Friendly suggestions

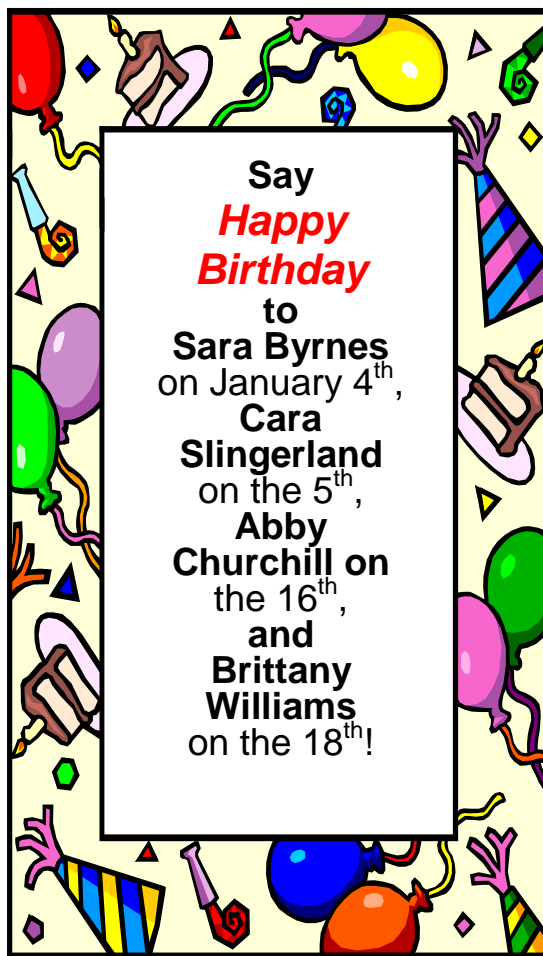
Here are some ideas for ways to build capacity in your friends group, and what the friends might do with funds they raise. Remember that donors are more willing to give for items that enhance the library, rather than the same old standard services, so be innovative.

1. Start a junior friends group to engage teens in fundraising for their own library programs.
2. Organize social gatherings for friends group members to foster their relationship with the group. Make a deal with a local restaurant to donate back a percentage of the proceeds from the gathering.
3. Start a planned giving program. In the beginning, this does not have to deal with complicated financial instruments— it could simply be literature encouraging bequests as a part of a person's will. Maybe a local estate attorney is willing to help create or review these materials on a pro bono basis.
4. Establish a Facebook page to allow the friends group to connect to members online

and maintain visibility. Also, make sure that all the materials one needs to become a member are accessible online, maybe on the library's website. Consider even including a Paypal button to collect dues and other donations online.

5. Hold an event. Be careful, though, as special events tend not to be especially profitable as fundraisers. So don't spend a lot of money; instead, focus on the event as a way of building awareness and goodwill for the friends group. Hold an open house at the library or invite a special speaker sponsored by the friends.
6. Seek grant opportunities which can not only be received by the friends group, but which they can also actively participate in. Participation builds a more vital group and creates a sense of ownership that will contribute to the success of the grant project.

Let me know how you are working with your friends groups (if they exist yet) and please share other ideas you may have. Portions of this article were paraphrased from Peter Pearson's presentation for "The Art of Fundraising and Grant Writing: An Online Conference" (19 Nov 2009).



Happy 2010: Five VISTA Resolutions

By Casey Gauthier

As we observe the launch of the year 2010, many of us adopted New Year's resolutions that we will work hard to achieve throughout the next twelve months. There are many things that we would like to achieve, embrace, and begin. There are also a number of things that we would like to forget, discard, and cease. Read below for some VISTA style resolutions to start the New Year off right!

1. Greet everyone with a smile...

...because a friendly "hello" or "good morning" can go a long way. This

simple step is important in building crucial relationships. Make a point to smile and avoid being caught up in your own thoughts when you are walking around your site or community.

2. Avoid assuming an idea will never work...

...because it very possibly could work! Look at it from a different angle, take a break and come back later, and use creative brainstorming. Negative phrases bring negativity to a project. Stay positive and that will show through in what you are working on.

3. Make innovative efforts to reach out to your community...

...because even though everything may be running smoothly right now, any time is always a good time to recruit new faces. A solid volunteer base can be made even stronger by including as many people as possible. Even if some can't physically attend, think of ways to reach them with information and include them in planning.

4. Raise awareness...

...because, sadly, most people are guilty of some form of a generalization or assumption. Volunteers don't need to be young and mobile to be appreciated. Some people can't attend regular meetings, but that doesn't mean they aren't interested. Everyone is interested in being heard, but they just might be scared or feel unworthy. Raising awareness can increase the success of your mission by getting everyone to work together and strengthening relationships.

5. Focus on the small achievements...

...because it's easy to get discouraged when the bigger things don't work out. Remember to appreciate even one new volunteer. Remember that even four people at an event is still of significance. Don't forget that sometimes getting through a long week is an achievement in and of itself. By appreciating the small things, each and every day is a huge success.

Anna answers Jim's questions

Anna Morgen is serving in the School District of Rhinelander.



Jim: If you were a pizza, what kind would you be and why?

Anna: If I were any kind of pizza I think I would probably be a slice of Ian's mac and cheese pizza. It is one of my favorites and you can always count on it being there no matter what time of day or night, even the wee hours of the morning.

Jim: What has surprised you the most about being a VISTA so far?

Anna: What has surprised me the most about being a VISTA so far is how receptive the teachers are. There is always someone more than willing to help out with a project or

idea that I have. Also, to see the teachers get really excited about a project, such as the one that I am planning for MLK Day, is really surprising. The fourth and fifth grade staff that I spoke to about the project seemed extremely excited to start on it right away. Unfortunately, we aren't starting the project until January, but they were ready to start planning it all out right there at the staff meeting.

Jim: When you tell people that you are a VISTA and they don't know what it means, what is your short, go-to answer?

Anna: My answer is that I work on promoting family and community involvement within the 4K through fifth grades in the School District of Rhinelander. At the same time, I keep in mind the district-wide goal of having every third grader at or above the third grade reading level by the time they enter into fourth grade. If I also throw in that I'm an AmeriCorps member- that usually helps a little, since some people have at least heard of AmeriCorps.

Jim: If you were stranded on a desert island for three months and could only have three "luxury items," what would they be?

Anna: I was actually just discussing this with one of my former college roommates. We both had decided that we wouldn't need to bring anything with us, just our other roommate. She is the handiest, most hardcore person that we know. She bikes in the snow, fixes her own clothes, makes drapes for windows, de-molds bathrooms, and can fix just about anything, like sinks, doors, and furniture with a very minimal amount of tools. She would definitely be able

to handle anything that a desert island would throw at us.

Jim: Is there anything your family or a member of your family does that is weird and what is it?

Anna: I would have to say that almost everyone in my family is definitely a little quirky. I can't think of anything that my family or a specific member of my family does that is weird. I'm sure that I am just used to them so whatever anyone else might think is weird is just normal to me.

Jim: What do you plan on doing when your VISTA service is over besides take Betsy's job and running DPI?

Anna: I will probably do another year of AmeriCorps. I don't know if I would do VISTA, AmeriCorps State and National, or NCCC. I would like to take the GRE this summer and then start applying to graduate schools.

Jim: What music do you prefer to listen to and why?

Anna: I don't really have a certain type of music that I listen to. I listen to whatever I'm in the mood for, from Elton John to The Strokes to The Black Keys. Since moving to Rhinelander, I have been trying really hard to be appreciative of country music and give it a fair chance, but it's been tough.

Jim: What does a young, recent college graduate who just moved to Rhinelander do to be one of the cool kids in town?

Anna: Since I am definitely not one of the cool kids in town, I could tell you what a young recent college graduate does to be one of the un-

cool kids in town. I go to bed early, wake up ridiculously early, and go to the YMCA with the fifteen other



people in Rhinelander who also wake up at a ridiculous hour. They then go to work and then after work go to Nicolet College, use their

internet and pretend to study for the GRE.

Jim: If you could only eat one food for the next year, what would you select?

Anna: I don't know about food, but I do know that if I could subsist off of Diet A&W Root Beer I would.

Jim: What is your most ambitious goal for your VISTA service?

Anna: I would really like to see more communication amongst the schools as a whole. A lot of great things are going on at different schools and no one seems to know about them. The school district has a lot of resources within it that are not utilized simply because people don't know about them.

Jim answers Anna's questions

Jim Handorf is serving at the Madison Public Library.



Anna: If you could have any superpower, what would it be?

Jim: The first thing that popped in my head was being able to read minds, but I think that would end up being more of a nuisance (like in the Gilligan's Island episode). If I could have any power, I would like the power of invisibility.

Anna: If you were a tree, what would you be?

Jim: A sugar maple. They look nice in the fall. They provide syrup. And when it's determined my life is over, I can be made into a bowling pin or a guitar.

Anna: What was the last book you read?

Jim: *Musicophilia* by Oliver Sacks. It's a great book if you like psychology and/or music.

Anna: If you had six months with no obligations or financial constraints, what would you do with the time?

Jim: Since I've never left the continental United States, I would definitely have to travel around the world. I'd start in Copenhagen, then London, Paris, Vienna, Prague, St. Petersburg, the Mediterranean, Cairo, Tokyo, Bali, New Zealand, Fiji, Chile, Brazil, Vancouver, and I'd end in New Brunswick and Maine. I would think this could take six months.

Anna: If you were having a dinner party and could invite three famous people, who would they be?

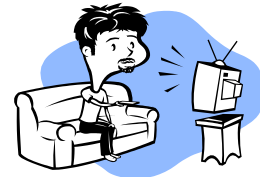
Jim: If they had to be alive, I would choose Bill Clinton, Quentin Tarantino, and Alex Trebeck. If they could be dead or alive, I would choose FDR, John Wayne, and Gandhi.

Anna: What has been your biggest challenge as a VISTA so far?

Jim: Setting up my days so I have a consistent work flow. It seems like there is always too much work or I'm struggling to keep myself busy.

Anna: What is one of your favorite things to do now that it's cold outside?

Jim: Staying inside and watching football and college basketball! I'm not much of a winter outdoorsman, but I'd like to get back into cross country skiing.



Anna: What are your plans for after your VISTA year of service is over?

Jim: I'm applying to various graduate programs. All are out-of-state so I'll be moving, adjusting to going to school again, and living in a new city. The programs have to do with human resource management, public policy, and organizational leadership.

Anna: What did you want to be when you were ten years old?

Jim: An FBI agent. I thought I'd be like Will Smith in *Men in Black*.

Anna: Who do you look up to the most in your life?

Jim: People who are happy. If someone loves their work, loves how they live life, and loves who they live it with, I want to be like that person.

SHARE and the Shiocton Public Library

By Penny Bruskin

When Becky Rickel put together her application to host a VISTA at the Shiocton Public Library, she knew that combating poverty in her community would require tackling issues on multiple fronts. While many public libraries have expanded their more resource-focused missions to catering services to community joblessness, adult education, and financial literacy, Becky saw VISTA as an opportunity to also address other elements of



poverty in her community, primarily access to affordable food.

Shiocton is a small community of less

than 1000 people, and has no grocery store. Community members have two options for getting food: they can drive 20 miles to and from the nearest grocery store or they can go to a local corner store and settle for few options and expensive prices. For those in the community who are unable to afford either option, they must travel to neighboring towns or villages to find the nearest food pantries.

Working with her VISTAs Heather Knops and Jane Parker, the team identified the SHARE program as a way to make quality food more accessible, especially after they learned that the program disbanded years earlier in a nearby community. The SHARE program is a nonprofit volunteer run food club that provides large orders of quality, low-cost food

to host sites around the state. The program accepts Quest payments for individuals and families living on low incomes.

Because they wanted to make this resource available to community members before the holiday influx of food needs, Heather and Jane worked to successfully set up the program at the Shiocton Public Library in early November. While they have not had much time to promote the program around the community, Heather and Jane have worked to promote the program through word of mouth. In the first month, Heather, Becky and Jane were able to provide \$500 worth of food to community members. The VISTAs have also partnered with a local community service agency in the hopes that they will be able to expand the program to reach more community members in future months. Additionally, they plan on working directly with churches to seek donations towards SHARE sponsorships for low-income community members.

As spring approaches there are plans to create a community garden from a plot of church land to make local vegetables even more accessible to the community. Keeping their VISTA capacity-building goals in mind, the Shiocton team plans to train a volunteer to sustain the program once it is more well-established in the community. For more information on the SHARE program, please <http://sharewi.org/> or contact the VISTA team at the Shiocton Public Library.

One Big Happy Family

By Betsy Prueter

Part of the value our VISTA project holds in Wisconsin is the complexity and diversity of sites and communities we serve. From a Family Resource Center in Spooner, to a Higher Ed/K-12 collaboration in Green Bay, to a public library in Racine, the work you are all doing is varied, but also, often parallel. While we seek to provide specific support to all of you in dealing with unique challenges and successes, it's rewarding to sit back and realize the interconnectedness in all of your work. While on any given day one of you might find yourself organizing a Family Literacy Night while another one of you attends a Friends of the Library meeting, the keys to everyone's *service-capacity building and sustainability*- link us to each other in multiple ways. We spend a lot of time talking about how "each site is different." But let's switch gears for a bit, and talk about the similarities in order for us to learn from each other. Read below for some common themes, and questions to ask of your fellow VISTAs for suggestions and strategies!

1. Empowering those you serve
How do the people you serve provide you with input? How are they involved with decision making? In what ways are you helping their voices be heard?
2. Engaging volunteers
What's the best way to find volunteers? Train them?

Support them? Keep them busy and productive?

3. Organizing information
Do you ever feel like your job might be professional email writer? Or binder compiler? But how are you leaving behind information in sustainable and easily accessible ways?
4. Mapping assets
Who are the assets in your community? How did you find them? What makes them so valuable?
5. Developing tools of communication
Who's working on a newsletter? A blog? A list serv? A newsletter article? A website? A bulletin board?
6. Connecting families and community members to resources
You're all helping to improve access to resources and services. How are you promoting these resources? How could they reach more individuals and more families?
7. Celebrating accomplishments
How do you recognize the work you're doing? Your volunteers? How do you pat yourselves on the back? How do you brag?
8. Researching models of success and sustainable solutions
What has worked for other schools? Non profits? Libraries? How are model programs across the country doing this work? Who has found some great examples to share?

Grant Opportunities



2010 Standing Up for Rural Wisconsin Schools, Libraries and Communities Award

The awards recognizes partnerships between and among schools, libraries, and communities that have resulted in programs or projects demonstrating the great potential and spirit of rural Wisconsin.

Winners will be recognized on Monday, February 22, 2010 at the State Capitol. Previous winners' achievements include constructing new libraries, educating students to answer the needs of local employers, using alternative fuel production to educate students and save money for the school district and local businesses, and involving youth in activities that meaningfully improve the community.

Deadline: January 15, 2009

<http://dpi.wi.gov/rural/suawards.html>

President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities: Coming Up Taller Awards

The Coming Up Taller Awards reward outstanding after-school and out-of-school arts and humanities programs for underserved children and youth. Maximum award: \$10,000. Eligibility: programs

initiated by museums, libraries, performing arts organizations, universities, colleges, arts centers, community service organizations, schools, businesses, and eligible government entities.

Deadline: January 29, 2010

<http://www.pcah.gov/cut.htm>

Independent Sector: The John W. Gardner Leadership Award

The John W. Gardner Leadership Award honors visionaries who have empowered constituencies, strengthened participation, and inspired movements. Award recipients are builders -- people who, quite apart from personal achievements, have raised the capacity of others to advance the common good. Their leadership has either had national or international impact or, if at the regional level, has attracted wide recognition and imitation. Maximum award: \$10,000. Eligibility: Gardner Award recipients may be of any age and be the creators of needed institutions or advocacy that changes public opinion and whose work has transformed their chosen field and has served as a role model to other fields.

Deadline: January 29, 2010.

<http://www.independentsector.org/about/gardneraward.htm>

Sprint Foundation: Grants for Character Education

The Sprint Foundation offers grants to school districts and individual schools in support of resources that facilitate and encourage character education among K-12 students

through programs that promote and/or address youth leadership, youth volunteerism, a positive school culture, and drop-out prevention. Maximum award: \$5,000 for individual schools, \$25,000 for school districts. Eligibility: all U.S. public schools (K-12) and U.S. public school districts.

Deadline: February 5, 2010

<http://www.sprint.com/responsibility/education/character/index.html?id8=vanity:educationgrants>

Welch's/Scholastic: Harvest Grants

The Harvest Grants funding program helps schools across the United States create fruit and vegetable gardens. Maximum award: packages valued at \$1,000 each. Eligibility: K-8 teachers.

Deadline: February 6, 2010

<http://www.scholastic.com/harvest/>

Intel Foundation: Schools of Distinction

The Intel Foundation Schools of Distinction Program honors U.S. schools that have demonstrated excellence in math and science education. In order to be considered as an Intel School of Distinction, schools must develop an environment and curricula that meet or exceed benchmarks, including national mathematics and science content standards. Maximum award: \$25,000. Eligibility: middle and high schools in the U.S.

Deadline: February 17, 2010

<http://www.intel.com/education/schoolsofdistinction/application.htm#Categories>

<http://www.intel.com/education/schoolsofdistinction/application.htm#Categories>

2009 VISTA Impact in Wisconsin

See link below for information about the awesome impact that VISTAs have had in Wisconsin over the past year.

<http://docs.google.com/fileview?id=0B2gllsKh7XWbNWlzMdY1OWEtNmNjNC00NmZmLTlmNDMtYTFmMjk5MWZlY2E2&hl=en>



DPI VISTA Monthly will be getting a new look next month, thanks to the formation of an editorial board! We are excited for the contributions of Josh Cowles, Erica Spurgeon, and Hannah Schulz!